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## Short Stories For Evening Hours

### MARIAN'S TWO LETTERS

Marian Westbrook sat in the great living room of the old Westbrook country home, her hands lying idly in her lap, her brow knit in strange abstraction of thought.

After all, she wondered, had she been justified in writing as she had to Forest Newbury and young Robert Thornton? She recalled the wording of the two letters. Each line was strangely vivid, even though she had hurriedly scratched off the notes a few days before, fearful lest, in pausing for careful composition, she lose courage and fall altogether in taking this important step.

In Forest's note she recalled the old days they had spent together in the little village where his father had officiated in the quaint, ivy-grown church of St. Vincent, and where his grandfather had preached before him. She spoke of the long summer days spent in gathering flowers and playing tennis on the Westbrook courts, and of the autumn evening confidences before the very fireplace into which she was now gazing so intently. She ended the note briefly:

"You asked me many times during those days one question. You recall it? I never wished to marry. I was selfish, perhaps. I am still selfish. Last night, when Dr. Morley told me that the illness against which I have been fighting so desperately had at last reached its crisis and that the change was for the worse, I decided that I could no longer live in hopeless, bitter loneliness. If you still want me, I will marry you."

The second note was less intimate, but equally to the point. She had met Robert Thornton on a Western trip the previous summer, and it was with peculiar forebodings and many inward promptings that she had finally summoned courage to send him the simple little note.

"My Dear Mr. Thornton," it ran. "I remember that we were standing at the top of Mount Winslow and the wind was keen and sweet against our faces, when you asked me that question for the first and, perhaps (who knows?) the last time. You said then 'If ever you are tired, if ever you are lonely, you have only to summon me. I will come.' I am no longer that active, free-limbed girl whom you used to compliment on mountain climbing. I am a hopeless, helpless invalid, but I am summoning you."

Marian Westbrook knew that both notes had reached their destination some 36 hours ago, and that if they had been received and promptly answered, she might expect the replies by the evening mail. What would be the result of her impetuous daring?

Of Forest Newbury's answer she was reasonably certain. He was a frail young clergyman and had always, in spite of frequent advances on the part of many moonstruck damsels of his city parish, held aloof, cherishing, as he frequently wrote her, one glorious image in his heart. Marian Westbrook, of the old days, had been inclined to treat the serious young preacher as a joke. Since her father's death, and the recent illness that had cut her off from active life and caused so many of her old friends to fall away from her, she turned back, with not a little tenderness, to the thought of renewed intimacy with the old lover and friend.

About Robert Thornton she was not so certain. His was a more robust, care-free nature, unhampered by the visions and moods of the temperamental young parson. She wondered if he still remembered her, and, if he did, whether that memory held anything of affection.

Well, it was a game well worth the playing. She had shown her hand and now it was left to the ever ruling Fates to decide the issue.

The great hall clock at the other end of the room ticked on monotonously. The girl shook back the soft lace from her wrist and searched the table beside her for some paper or book with which to distract her thoughts. She picked up a volume of poems but threw it aside.

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"One letter, Miss Marian. Can I do anything for you?"

Marian managed to smile upon the little maid, as she shook her head.

"No, Marie, I am quite comfortable." The letter was lying on the table now within reach, but she was afraid to glance toward it, knowing that the handwriting would at once betray its author.

"Very well," said Marie.

As the maid left the room, Marian clutched the letter with an odd little cry. It was from Forest, dear old friend. She could always depend upon him! She tore open the seal.

She turned page after page in feverish haste. At the end, she bowed her head in her hands and though harsh, choking sobs forced their way to her lips, her eyes remained dry.

The letter was kind enough, but self-centered and egotistical in tone. Forest Newbury wrote that he remembered everything. He would always love her, but he cherished her rather as a vision, a dream to be satisfied in the hereafter, than as a woman made for the brutal cares of life. He was very poor and his parish was growing. He was bitterly sorry to hear of her ill health. He would run down to see her as soon as possible. There must of necessity be some delay, as his people required so much of his time and energy. In a word, as Marian confessed to herself, in spite of all his tactful rhetoric, he did not want her, a burdensome invalid, upon his hands.

She sat before the fire for an hour, or a minute—she could not have told which—musing. It was the entrance of Marie that finally roused her.

"A gentleman, Miss Marian. Shall I show him in?"

Marian spoke listlessly. "If you please, Marie." She remembered that Dr. Morley had told her that as he was unusually busy, his assistant would make the customary call that evening.

She did not raise her head until the footsteps paused at her side. Then she cried aloud, and her face grew strangely white as she raised her eyes to those of Robert Thornton.

"You, you," she gasped—"You—"

There was a wondrous tenderness in his dark eyes as he answered her. "Did you not expect me?"

She sobbed, half dazed: "I do not know. I do not know. I would only be a burden."

He knelt at her side. "Little white flower," he said, "I am glad that you are frail and weak, that you can no longer walk, for now you will see how great is my love—and my strength will be enough for two."

She pushed him aside; then, with a strange roughness, "It is a lie," she said. "Forgive me, but it was only to test you, to see what love means to a man. It is true that I have been very ill—that the crisis was reached a week ago, but it was for the better, not for worse. Soon I shall be well."

Then, as he sprang toward her in the freight, she sobbed against his shoulder, "And I love you."

### JUDGE HANAIKE DEAD

LIHUE, Kauai, Jan. 29.—Judge F. B. Hanaike, second District Magistrate of Lihue and deputy Tax Assessor for this district, died at ten o'clock last morning, after remaining unconscious since five o'clock on Monday evening, since which time he had not spoken a word.

He was one of the most prominent of the Hawaiian residents of the district, where he has dwelt since 1879, and was universally respected and beloved, having a spirit of rare kindness and steadfast devotion to his duties. He was never very robust, and of late has suffered considerably from a complication of several ailments, which ended in the paralysis of one side of his body, the day before his death.

He was born in Hilo District, Island of Hawaii, at Kukuau, on May 21, 1846, so was sixty-three years and eight months of age at the time of his death.—Garden Island.

A man believed to be George Musgroves, for whom a reward has been offered for thirteen years because of a murder by the "Black Jack" gang near Roswell, N. M., is under arrest at North Platte, Neb.

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